



# Success in the nonlethal fight

By SGM Reginald M. Young, FA

**I**n ongoing counterinsurgency operations, there has been a need for balance of lethal and nonlethal effects in the operational environment for the field artillery. To continue to achieve full-spectrum relevance, despite known field artillery skills atrophy, fires professionals at all levels must be able to coordinate and deliver a wide range of nonlethal effects.

For the past several years, success on the battlefield meant the minimal use of force to gain decisive support of indigenous populations, because locals who were influenced positively by military operations often were more cooperative and offered information on known enemy locations. In contrast, a town or village that had been alienated was more likely to harbor terrorists, emplace improvised explosive devices or riot against Coalition Forces. Due to the urbanization of the

world, this is unlikely to change anytime in the near future.

As a result, the ability to adapt to the current battlefield situation has become a critical attribute for all FA NCOs, as well as knowing how to strike the right balance between employing lethal and nonlethal effects. Integrating lethal and nonlethal capabilities not only has become a core competency for field artillery leaders at all levels, it has become a non-negotiable necessity.

Nonlethal effects in the past have included information operations and psychological operations coordinated by fires and effects cells. But in today's battlefield environment, nonlethal effects can and should include initiatives and coordination traditionally viewed as a part of civil affairs team's mission or other nonlethal teams.

**Past successes.** In April 2007, when the Soldiers of 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga., deployed to Baghdad

to help Iraqi security forces reduce violence and protect Iraqi citizens, striking that right balance between lethal and nonlethal action became the key to a successful deployment.

The 3rd ID was involved intimately in improving health care for citizens; rebuilding elementary schools, roads and other infrastructure; revitalizing water and electricity hubs; and creating job and educational opportunities for Iraqis. No quality-of-life task was considered to be foreign territory.

Once stability and control were set, it was clear 3rd ID Soldiers had to think beyond current concepts. They had to be willing to implement new ideas and capabilities to improve the quality of life for Iraqi citizens further.

But to do this, 3rd ID Soldiers had to find out what the Iraqi people needed. The need to be versatile became very apparent. No formal pre-deployment training could have prepared the 3rd ID.

Members of the Sons of Iraq push their way into the check-in window at their headquarters in Multaka, Iraq, to register for their monthly salaries, March 6. (Photo by PO2 Brian Short, U.S. Navy)

The NCO Creed states “I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders.” So in many cases, to create a wedge between the local population and extremist organizations and insurgents, often 3rd ID Fires professionals couldn’t refer to anything found in an Army manual. They had to make things work. Most importantly they had to listen to the people.

**Iraqis are just like Americans.** Iraqis want quality of life, and they want to live in safe communities. They want to be part of the solution, but they need the skills to make it happen. So in response to their needs, 3rd ID created more than 60 patrol bases in and among Iraqi neighborhoods. As Fires professionals, they became a force that could integrate into and operate as part of a joint multinational team to continue to meet the Iraqi communities’ needs by living among the people they were tasked to help.

To help security-based measures further, 3rd ID, along with Coalition Forces, created the idea of an amplified neighborhood watch system led by Iraqi citizens and augmented by U.S. forces. The “Sons of Iraq” consisted of concerned local citizens who were tired of the violence and uncertainty and who were willing to take a stand and man checkpoints to give their friends and neighbors a secure environment.

The newly implemented security measures also included paying these concerned Iraqi citizens an \$8 a day wage for their commitment. The program proved to be so accepted and successful, at one point, more than 36,000 Iraqis participated in the Sons of Iraq, performing security operations in and around the southern belt of Baghdad.

**Increased security means an increased economy.** By integrating a nonlethal effects approach to security measures, the area started to see a corresponding rise in economic stability. Due to roadside violence, roadside markets in the region had all but disappeared. But as Iraqis took more responsibility for the security of their own neighborhoods, roadside markets started to reappear.

Because of the safer environment, traditional agriculture and animal husbandry also made resurgence. The major terrain feature of the region is the Euphrates

River, which borders the Triangle to the southwest; so mostly farm land makes up the topography. These farms are usually small and, in the past, were maintained by the families who owned the land.

To help Iraqis return to their financially viable agricultural roots, 3rd ID engineers significantly improved the water infrastructure in Arab Jabour by reconstructing pumping stations and pipelines. This meant clean drinking water, a way to feed livestock, the ability to farm fish, and it also became a way to produce consistent electricity. Repairing these water pipelines and canals benefited more than 2.2 million Iraqis. Most areas went from having only one hour of electricity per day to several hours per day.

**Money as munitions.** While there, leaders had to think of money as munitions, and this became just as important as dropping bombs on buildings in many cases. The 3rd ID created other economic opportunities by thinking outside of normal operational patterns. One particular creative idea was the implementation of

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micro-grants. Through this initiative, new and existing Iraqi businesses were created and revived. Some businesses were built from the ground up, while others were merely refurbished or restocked. Extending financial sums between \$50 and \$500 to local businesses and owners led to the economic revitalization of a community that had been all but devastated.

Another powerful example of nonlethal effects came in the form of what was called “pocket money.” Basically, commanders on the ground were empowered to give out single \$50 payments as they saw fit to cement relationships with businessmen in the local community and to stimulate economic growth further. The division commander, LTG Rick Lynch, and other ground commanders would check up to see how the money ended up being used. In all cases, everyone was empowered to do the right thing, and most did exactly what the grant money was issued to do.

## **P**reparing for nonstandard missions.

There is always a danger that as we reset, retrain and refocus on correcting field artillery skills atrophy, the lessons of past success with nonlethal effects will recede from memory. That is why, as NCOs and leaders, we must provide every opportunity for our Soldiers to participate in civilian training and college education, avenues of self-development and experience that takes place outside the military organization to continue achieving success in the area of nonlethal effects. You never know where inspiration to create some of these nonlethal effects will come from.

Yes, we can and should teach our Soldiers how to do things by the regulation, but these other types of experiences and education can give them the insight, the wisdom and the maturity to know when it is appropriate to diverge from the known azimuth. We must be schooled in the basics. But we also must become adaptive leaders who are proficient in joint and combined expeditionary warfare and continuous simultaneous full-spectrum operations. We must be leaders who are culturally astute and resilient to uncertain and ambiguous environments while integrating nonlethal fires and effects.

NCOs must perform the kind of critical thinking and problem-solving skills that formerly were reserved for officers. We must teach NCOs that they are responsible for these critical thinking skills as well. Because then, as Fires professionals, we can continue to destroy, neutralize and suppress the enemy with whatever means possible, lethal or nonlethal, leading to full-spectrum dominance on the battlefield. ■

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